Food Information Series
United States Department of Agriculture
Office of Information
Washington 25, D. C.

August 7, 1943 No. 48

Subject: Background Statement on Dry Beans

Field Distribution: War Board members, Extension Editors, BAE analysts, FDA Marketing Reports Chiefs, SCS, FSA, FCA Regional Information Chiefs

Suggested Use: Background Information

Dry beans are a fighting food. High nutritive value and low cost furnish part of the reason, but in addition they pack well, ship well and keep well which makes for convenience in handling and storing. From the farmer's standpoint they are a hardy crop and provide a good return without requiring too much in labor and attention.

Production of dry beans in 1942 exceeded all previous harvests, totalling in round figures 19,608,000 bags of 100 pounds each (uncleaned) from 2,135,000 acres. Indications are that the 1943 harvest will be slightly more than 22,000,000 bags (uncleaned) from an estimated 2,807,000 acres --- an all-time record. These will be needed, as demands from the military, civilian and lend-lease markets have shown a steady increase.

About two-fifths of the supply of beans available for consumption through September, 1943 will be required by the United States armed forces and the Allies. Close to 60 percent of the 1943 crop is expected to be allocated to the Food Distribution Administration for these and other outlets. Russia is the largest lend-lease consumer of beans, one of the basic foods of all the Allied Armies. Virtually all beans sent to Russia are eaten by the fighting men, and the same is true of the United Kingdom.

Shipments of dry beans under lend-lease from July 1, 1942 to June 30, 1943 totalled 255,024,000 pounds or 2,550,240 sacks of 100 pounds each. Of this, 169,136,000 pounds were shipped between January 1 and June 30, 1943.

Produce from one acre of dry beans will meet the requirements of 4,763 soldiers in a given period, but will serve only 1,155 sailors due to the more frequent appearance of this food on navy menus.

One acre's production consigned to lend-lease for civilian use, according to the Bureau of Home Economics and Human Nutrition, will serve beans for one meal, for example, to some 6,062 Polish refugees, Yugoslav prisoners of war, or Greek civilians.

The average per capita consumption of dry beans in the United States was .17 pounds per week, or 8.9 pounds per year during 1935 through 1942. Dry bean stockpiles for the spring of 1943 were less than in 1942, and per capita supplies for civilian consumption this year are estimated at about 6 percent below the level in 1941-42, approximately 12 percent below the quantity consumed in 1940-41 and approximately 7 percent below the average rate of consumption during the five years, 1935-39.

Raise Several Types

Many varieties of dry beans are grown in the United States, the most common being pea beans (navy beans). Others are the Great Northern, Cranberry, and black-eyed types. Kidney beans of many kinds are grown in some areas, and in California limas are widely raised.

Michigan, leading state in plantings with 791,000 acres for 1943, grows mostly pea beans. This is an increase of 158,000 acres over 1942. Colorado, second in acreage this year, shows an increase of 234,000 acres, to make 584,000 for 1943. California's 452,000 acres, where the preponderance is in limas, added 66,000 to its 1942 acreage this year. Other leading growers by states are New Mexico, 300,000 acres; Idaho, 157,000 acres; New York, 142,000 acres; Wyoming, 115,000 acres; Nebraska, 101,000 acres and Montana, 66,000 acres. All of these states, with the exception of New York, increased their plantings this year, New York showing a decrease of 16,000 acres.

Individual state increases range from 9 percent in New Mexico and 11 percent in Idaho, to 154 percent in Montana and 166 percent in Nebraska. New York plantings are down about 11 percent.

Whatever the color, shape, name or variety, dry beans of all types are good nourishing food. They come close to meat, eggs, milk and cheese as body builders, and are an excellent basic nutrient. Besides a high protein content, dry beans contain good amounts of carbohydrate, high calcium and phosphate content, considerable iron, important quantities of Vitamin B_1, riboflavin and niacin, and a high calory count. Because they supply so many vital nutrition needs, dry beans have been a diet staple since early times.

Total indicated plantings of 2,807,000 acres in 1943 is 44 percent higher than the 10-year average, and 31.5 percent more than in 1942. The additional acres include 27,000 acres in Texas, South Dakota and North Dakota where commercial planting had previously been practically non-existent.

The 10-year average on plantings from 1932-41 was 1,750,000 acres, and the average bean harvest was 14,325,000 bags.

Michigan, with an estimated production of 6,222,000 bags, is expected to produce about 28 percent of the 1943 crop. California's more than 5,604,000 sacks put her in second place with 25 percent of the total crop. The four states of Montana, Idaho, Wyoming and Nebraska, with 5,191,000 bags,

will produce about 24 percent. Of the prospective California crop 2,325,000 bags are expected to be limas, including baby limas.

Conditions reported by bean growers as of July 1 indicate that 1943 yields may be a little below average in Montana, Idaho, California (limas), New Mexico and New York, and average or better in all other important states.

Expect Good Harvest

The average planted to dry beans is 31.5 percent more than last year and 29 percent more acres are expected to be harvested. Production is expected, however, to be only 12 percent more than in 1942.

While a record acreage has been planted, many fields are on ground that in usual circumstances would not have been used for beans this year. Weather conditions and soil conditions caused delays in planting. Some growers have had little recent experience with beans. As a result, the increased plantings cannot reasonably be expected to produce a corresponding increase in beans in the bag.

Yield per acre for 1943 is indicated at 866 pounds. This is 129 pounds less per acre than in 1942, when the yield was 995 pounds. The 1932-41 average was 837 pounds per acre.

Dry bean goal for 1943 is 25,500,000 bags (uncleaned) compared with a production of 19,608,000 bags in 1942.

Total income to farmers from dry beans for the 1942 crop is estimated at $91,132,000. Growers received an average price of $5.21 per 100-pound sack for U.S. No. 1 beans, and 17,477,000 sacks (cleaned) went to market.

Guaranteed support prices for the 1943 crop, if support is necessary, have been set at $6.50 per hundred pounds for U. S. No. 1 beans, cleaned and bagged in carlots, f.o.b. carrier, at country shipping points for the following classes: Pea, Great Northern, Small White, Flat Small White, Pinto, Pink, Small Red and Cranberry. A guaranteed support price of $7.50 per hundred pounds has been set for U. S. No. 1 Lima, Baby Lima, Light Red Kidney, Dark Red Kidney and Western Red Kidney beans. These prices apply only to edible beans produced in 1943. Farm income from the 1943 crop will be around $130,000,000 if 20,000,000 bags are marketed.

Despite increased acreages in 1943, and an increase in total production, 1944 will see still further development of the dry bean program. It will probably require even more shifts in crop emphasis on individual farms than in 1943, plus a stepping up of production per acre.